



AUTHENTIC COMPASSION? O. TOSCANI'S OUTRAGEOUS CAMPAIGNS: AN ETHIC-ESTHETICAL INQUIRY FROM A THEOLOGIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

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This article presents an ethical-esthetical examination of Oliviero Toscani's shocking photographs. Thereby it shortly introduces Toscani's life and work and proceeds with a description and analysis of three of his major works: the photographs of the anorexic model Isabelle Caro; the advertisement photographs for the Jesus-jeans as well as the UNHATE campaign – one of his photo series for *United Colors of Benetton*. The article aims to point out the ethical implications of his works, especially from a theologian's perspective. It picks up relevant ethical theories and methods of evaluation, such as the principle of double action (Peter Knauer).

Keywords: ethical borderland, human dignity, Knauer, principle of double action, Toscani.

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Introduction

“The largest advertising campaign in the history of humanity was launched by Jesus Christ. It operated under the universal slogan ‘love your neighbour’. And it had a remarkable logo: the cross” (Toscani 1995: 131).

Look: a newborn (Fig. 1). Not in a manger, at least not this time, but on a two square feet billboard at a bus stop. It is huge, bloody, crying, the umbilical cord still uncut – we cannot miss it. In the lower left hand corner a small green banner covers the white background, on it the four words unmasking the responsible company: *UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON* (cf. Toscani 1995: 52f).



Fig. 1. Newborn

The newborn is just one of the photographs which turned Toscani into one of the world's most famous artists. Toscani's oeuvre is characterized by its immense realism: he refuses to portray the expected idyll of the commercialised product. Instead he promotes socio-political images and thus de-contextualizes scenes that function as metaphors for the underlying message (cf. Tinic 1997: 9). His "aestheticization of politics" (Giroux 1994, quoted after Tinic 1997: 15) reveals advertising between the poles of "advocacy and controversy" (Tinic 1997: 11f).

In the following, I aim to shed light on Toscani's controversially debated campaigns, by discussing the question of the ethical defensibility of certain selected images. Due to limited space capacities, an analysis of advertising strategies has to be desisted. Further, the certainly interesting and appropriate question, whether *Benetton* sticks to its vision of improving life conditions within its own company and the working conditions of its employees, can only be brought up at the moment (cf. Toscani 1995: 45).

Toscani – his life and work

Toscani is born in 1942 in Milan, Italy, as the son of the photo-journalist Fedele Toscani, who works for the *Corriere della Sera*. From an early age on, Toscani accompanies his father to meetings, press conferences and reportages. In 1957, father and son are documenting the election for Miss Italy in Rimini, while they receive the news of the transport of the corpse of the hanged Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. The two immediately hurry to the graveyard, where 14-year-old Toscani shoots his first worldwide well-known photo of Mussolini's widow, Rachele Mussolini, with his own camera (cf. Salvemini 2002: 9; cf. Toscani 1995: 101–104). Being inspired by photography, Toscani is dedicated to his studies of photography and design at the Academy of Arts in Zurich, Switzerland, from age nineteen to twenty-three. In Zurich, Toscani is drawn by the so-called *concerned photography*, which turns out to be the focus of his life's projects (cf. Toscani 1995: 106). Concerned photography captures crossing frontiers as well as political and social issues, while the photographer's own

philosophy of life and opinion is expressed in the photo as well: "Esthetics refers to ethics" (Salvemini 2002: 10).

Toscani starts his career by working for brands like *Esprit*, *Valentino*, *Chanel*, *Fiorucci* and *Prénatal*. Already in the 1980s, his photography is shaped by an unconventional feature: The models presenting the *Esprit*-collections are un-styled rather than professional models. His work as a fashion photographer for further magazines (*Elle*, *Vogue*, *GQ*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Esquire*, *Stern*, *Liberation*) brings him additional success (cf. Toscani 1995: 123). In 1982 Toscani's collaboration with the Italian fashion brand *Benetton* takes off (cf. Munzinger 2011; cf. Toscani 1995: 119). Apart from the cooperative design he develops, as well as his newly found magazine *Colors*, which becomes "a cult journal for the publishing avant-garde in the whole world" (Salvemini 2002: 131; Toscani 1995: 49), Toscani collaborates with *Benetton* by opening the International Center for Art and Modern Communication in Treviso, Italy, in 1993. Exhibitions, films and other media products are developed and distributed by the Center. Toscani's films (e.g. on anorexia, osteoporosis and violence among teenagers) win prizes at different film festivals and find world-wide attention (his works are shown at the Biennale as well as at the Triennale and in museums all over the world). From 1999 to 2000 Toscani works as Creative Director with *Talk Miramax New York* (cf. Munzinger 2011; cf. Salvemini 2002: 10, 131). He is the founder of *La Sterpaia* – "a creative agency that offers all traditional and creative communication services for corporate, social and institutional needs" (*La Sterpaia* 2009). Besides being the art director for *Music Box*, Toscani has been curator of several major cultural events (cf. Munzinger 2011). One of his major projects is *Razza Umana* – for which Toscani, in company of several young photographers, tours through his home country to celebrate its 150th anniversary of unification by portraying fellow countrymen. Toscani is not only an active photographer but also founding-professor at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio, Switzerland, and professor at various other universities (Munzinger 2011).

For his achievements, Toscani has won several prizes: He is four-time winner of the Palme d'Or (Cannes); the Unesco Grand Prix; Creative Hero of the Saatchi & Saatchi Cleo Hero Show (cf. Munzinger 2011).

Toscani's provocative photo campaigns

"It is art's duty to 'surprise and communicate'" (Munzinger 2011).

Toscani's provocative career hit its pitch in several campaigns for *UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON*. Serra A. Tinic refers to David Allen (1991: J8) when she states: "the campaign is very much a reflection of Toscani's 'personal world view'" (Allen 1991: J8). As a former art student and the son of a photojournalist, Toscani is one of advertising's harshest critics. Indeed, his own words reflect the arguments of many mass society critics:

"The advertising industry has corrupted society. It persuades people that they are respected for what they consume, that they are only worth what they possess. <...> One day there will be a Nuremberg trial of advertisers who have corrupted every

form of communication. I will sit on it, I will be the prosecution and the public” (Tinic 1997: 8f; last quote in Clough 1992: 15).

Without showing a single piece of clothing (at least not since 1989 (cf. Tinic 1997: 3–5)), Toscani’s advertising’s effectiveness is portrayed in the immense growth *Benetton* records: The company prospered twenty times within eighteen years. Toscani’s works portray shocking realities, alerting photographs that leave the observer with an uncomfortable feeling. Tinic takes a rather critical standpoint by pointing out: “Although it is impossible to determine if the *United Colors* strategy has provided the catalyst for *Benetton’s* profit increases and market growth, the series has contributed to the company’s international recognition and notoriety” (Tinic 1997: 4).

Although Toscani’s pictures show various motives, one can easily distinguish similarities. For example, there are the photos working with color contrasts: a young nun dressed in her white habit, kissing a priest dressed in a black one; a black horse mounting a white horse; a black woman nursing a white baby; a black and a white toddler, sitting in front of each other on their potties, the black one touching the white one’s mouth (cf. Salvemini 2002: 29f, 46). Further, there are those contrasting the observer’s realities with challenging moments of other people’s every day life: the blood-soaked clothes of a Bosnian soldier, the twenty doomed men in US American prisons, waiting for the death penalty to be executed with the banner saying SENTENCED TO DEATH; a dying adult man lying in a bed, surrounded by his loved ones – he is HIV positive. With his photographs, Toscani confronts the observer with the rather unseen, the suppressed. Oversizely, ultra-largely, the observer is involuntarily taken into a scene he or she usually tends to blend out. There are several unconventional and interesting aspects about Toscani’s works: By portraying the un-portrayed, he draws the viewer’s attention and unobtrusively connects it with the brand he campaigns for. Strange to say, Toscani advertises clothes without showing a single piece of them. Moreover, his photographs seem to transport a rather socio-political message instead of fashion news. However, the successfulness of *UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON* verifies Toscani’s concept: By bluntly confronting the observer with de-contextualized realities, Toscani evokes the guilty consciousness. In its deepest emotions the seeing human is called to responsibility: “You should do something against it”; “do not turn away, because this time you cannot”. Thus, Toscani creates a visual space of common moral concepts; a space, we want to *unite* in for reasons of peace and friendship. With his photographs, he fights against racism, prejudice, outcast, religious intolerance, hatred and pain – he fights for respect and human dignity by making the one common thing obvious: we are all humans (cf. Salvemini 2002: 30). Regardless of our color, background, health condition, we are *united* by the sheer fact of being human and thus we are all equal. Moreover, we thereby join a union, which stands for our equality, fights for human dignity, and represents our values: we are *UNITED* with *the COLORS OF BENETTON*. Even more than that, we identify with *their* message (cf. Salvemini 2002: 30; cf. Tinic 1997: 8, 10; “brand awareness”, cited after *Benetton...* 1992; cf. Munzinger 2011). Tinic refers to Varda Langholz Leymores striking statement: “*In buying certain products or obtaining a service, one buys not only a ‘thing’, but also an image. This image consists of belief and the hope in something better*” (Tinic 1997: 13, quoted after Leymore 1975: 156).

It was in the late 1980s, when Toscani changed his concept, by bringing values instead of products to the market. "From there on, all of *Benetton's* advertising campaigns desist from displaying the products themselves – basically surprising the advertising system, especially if one considers that the instructing company produces articles of clothing" (Salvemini 2002: 44).

Moreover, Lorella Pagnucco Salvemini hints to the link between the "moral universalism" and the "consumption's universalism", which necessitated a new slogan: in 1985, the former slogan "All the colours of the world" is replaced by "UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON". By writing "colors" in the American instead of the previous English version, the company's focus becomes obvious. More than that, the similarity with the *United States* or the *United Nations* enhances the political and social message of *Benetton* (cf. Salvemini 2002: 31; cf. Tinic 1997: 5).

The already mentioned pictures of the US-American doomed men provoke a revolt within the United States of America: the US chain of shops *Sears* resigns its 400 contracts with *Benetton* and Missouri State institutes legal proceedings. As a consequence, *Benetton* recalls all death row photographs, which finally leads to the end of Toscani's collaboration with *Benetton* after eighteen years (cf. Salvemini 2002: 130; cf. Munzinger 2011).

Before pointing out the theological intertwining and message of Toscani's work, I would like to hint at two more campaigns: The Osteoporosis (Osteoporosis... 2005) and the *No-ANOREXIA* campaign (Italy Bans anorexia 2007). Both campaigns are developed in independence of *Benetton*, as will be explicated.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares that the fight against osteoporosis is one of its highest priorities in the near future. In this context, Toscani's nude photograph series is initiated by the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF), the Alliance for Better Bone Health, the German Green Cross and a number of patients, scientists and doctors, who dedicate their work to the prevention and treatment of bone diseases. For his nude photography series, Toscani shows twenty-four men and women from age twenty-five to ninety-two, who have been diagnosed osteoporosis. One can clearly see the damages from the many bone fractures, those people have suffered. Their bodies are – depending on the stage of the illness – shaped by deformations. By exhibiting those giant photographs, Toscani again forces the observer into an extreme closeness with those people, with strangers. He forces us to look at the deformed bodies, the pain and worry their bodies and faces stand for. Moreover, we might be confronted with our own image in a couple of years. Even though Gianni Vattimo expresses his doubts regarding the preventive message pictures of suffering people have (he thereby refers to the portray of the HIV positive man mentioned earlier) (cf. Salvemini 2002: 93), there is a connectedness between our own lives and theirs, our own bodies and theirs – sometime soon, our bodies could look exactly like theirs, if we do not care for prevention. For this campaign, Toscani wins the Life Award of the international congress *Aging and Society* (*Deutsches Grünes Kreuz...* 2012). As in the shocking picture of the *Benetton* campaign, there is again a critical side to the campaign, hinting at the missing prevention advices or health education (cf. Tinic 1997: 12–14).

The *No-ANOREXIA* as well as the (No-)-Obesity campaign are two more in the shocking series of Toscani's lifestyle reflections. Eating disorders are another marker of our Northern European society. In the following, I will focus on the *No-ANOREXIA* campaign. The advertisement campaign for the Italian fashion brand *No-l-ita*, shows the anorexic French actress Caro (1982–2010) posing naked with the pink *No-ANOREXIA* writing in the background. Italy and France accuse the photograph for violating human dignity and consequently prohibit its distribution and exhibition in their countries. The Publicity Control Institute's (IAP) president Giorgio Florida arguments that "[t]he photo is shocking for everyone, particularly those who are sick, and has been set up for commercial ends" (*BCC News* 2007; cf. Müller 2010: 208).

Even though Toscani is accused of making capital out of sick people, the controversially discussed photographs, which appear contemporaneously with the Milan fashion week, urge the debate on dangerously skinny fashion models and one easily gets the impression that the commercial harm for the fashion displayers is what Italy is honestly worried about (cf. Salvemini 2002: 92f; cf. Tinic 1997: 4, 11; Italy Bans "No Anorexia" Poster 2007).

"Violating human dignity" – what is the debate really about?

The French actress Caro causes a stir by modelling for Toscani's *No-ANOREXIA* campaign. The photographs (Figs. 2, 3) show a 1.64 m tall women weighing 31 kg. Caro herself describes her appearance as a "representation of death" (Isabelle Caro... 2010). Like in the osteoporosis campaign, the model is naked and again, body deformations can easily be seen (for example the turgescence on her bottom). The viewer is appalled by the excrescent proportions of the anorexic body: Caro's eyes appear extraordinarily big; the circumference of her upper arm is almost identical with the one of the lower arm and the wrist; the elbow sticks out like an unfitting prosthesis; her feet and joints look too massive compared to the tiny body they have to carry. Joints and bones, every rib and every vertebra shine through the almost transparent skin of the skeleton. Tiny breast are a further indication for the inanimateness Caro's body shows. The undersized corpus, wanting to disappear from life's harshness is displayed on an oversize poster in the mega-cities of the world.



Fig. 2. Isabelle Caro



Fig. 3. Isabelle Caro

In the following, I briefly discuss the question whether Toscani's photographs violate human dignity (cf. Italy Bans anorexia 2007), on the basis of the Anorexia campaign example. My first hypothesis is that it is not the portrayal of those photographs that violates human dignity; but that the violation of human's dignity precedes the portrayal and that the sharpness of the debate is partially based on our neglected responsibility for others. I do so, by referring to the preamble and articles one and twenty-two of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The preamble starts off with the following words: "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world <...>. <...> Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom <...>" (The Universal Declaration... 2012).

There are several interesting aspects about the assumption of "inherent dignity <...> of all members of the human family": Firstly, every human is born with dignity and thus dignity can neither be awarded nor deserved or gained, because from the moment of existence, humans exist with dignity. Secondly, this dignity seems to be a distinguishing feature between humans and non-humans. Thirdly, this dignity cannot be taken away from any human being, because it was not added to them – it is *inherent*. As a consequence, whatever happens to humans can be an unjust or unfair or dishonourable action, but only the action itself can be without dignity, neither the one performing the action nor the one being object of the performance. If human dignity can be considered not only as an anthropological but further as an ontological category, humans themselves can never lose their dignity, while dignity-neglecting actions are certainly possible. In our example of Toscani photographing Caro, talking of violated human dignity is at least questionable. There are numerous reasons and causes that lead to anorexia. Unfortunately, society tends to hold on to the prejudice that anorexic people stop eating in order to "look like a model". It is bad enough that "stopping to eat" and "look like a model" can very often be used simultaneously; however the reason why anorexic people stop to eat are as different as can be. In the present context, it is important to point to the fact that the eating disorder itself is not the primary problem, but a solution to a problem. Just like in alcoholism, the alcohol

is not the primary problem, but for the addict the most effective way to deal with a problem. This leads us to the following insight: if anorexia is the solution to a problem, anorexic humans are walking cries for help. They advise us, the observer, to a further problem, that they obviously cannot handle and thus are a living monument of help that has been refused. In this moment, the observer is automatically held accountable. Caro is therefore a visual metaphor for something that is severely going into the wrong direction in our society, just like the bloody clothes of the Bosnian soldier can be understood as a metaphor (cf. Tinic 1997: 17; cf. Toscani 1995: 86–94). Why do those pictures offend us to such an extent? Might it be that we do not like to be confronted with the consequences of our lifestyles and conveying of values? Might it be that we are the ones who want to decide the moment and degree we reflect certain truths and do not like to be forced to take notice? Might it be that we all know that we have an impact on others and thus a responsibility for the values we align ourselves with and that those people in Caro's environment did not succeed in helping the girl she was, when she first suffered from anorexia as a thirteen-year-old, who failed in teaching her coping strategies? The answer is: in a way, we all did and we continue to do so, if we refuse to deal with the problem by professionalizing our repressive mechanisms, instead of opening ourselves to the world around our small ideal world.

Article 1 and Article 22 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declare:

Article 1: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (The Universal Declaration... 2012: Article 1).

Article 22: “Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality” (The Universal Declaration... 2012: Article 22).

Caro stands for an increasing number of anorexic women and men whose “(economic), social and cultural rights indispensable for his [her] dignity and the free development of his [her] personality” have been neglected. It becomes more obvious, that taking and showing a picture of someone whose human dignity has been violated is not the same as violating human dignity.

Toscani's message for theology

“Thou shalt not have any other gods but me”. This verse un-mistakenly alludes to the second / third of the Ten Commandments (“You shall have no other gods before me”. (Exod. 20: 3; Deut. 5: 7)). It is written on a picture of an erotic female belly, showing the unzipped jeans on her hips. The slogan on a second picture (Fig. 4) says “He who loves me follows me” and appears on the backside of a tight female jeans hot pants of the brand Jesus-jeans, reminding us of John 12: 26 “Whoever serves me must follow me <...>” and John 14: 15 “If you love me, you will obey what I command”. A bible verse written onto a female bottom (cf. Müller 2010: 207; cf. Toscani 1995: 135f). Even though Toscani himself stresses his distanced relation to religion and church (cf. his interview with the German journal SPIEGEL: “I can only believe in myself”

(Schmidt, Vaske 2000: 127; Müller 2010: 208)) and thus does not primarily pursue a religious goal, his posters nevertheless transport a religious message. The famous Italian stage director and author, Pier Paolo Pasolini, characterizes the Jesus-jeans campaign as symptomatic for Italian's society. In the following, I will firstly state Pasolini's interpretation of the Jesus-jeans campaign. Both, the Jesus-jeans campaign as well as the UNHATE campaign, work with religious images, each time provoking the Vatican. Secondly, I will describe the photographs' messages from a theological observer's view and take a standpoint to the controversies with the Vatican, which those photographs have led to.



Fig. 4¹. “He who loves me follows me”

Pasolini's interpretation. The advertisement for the Jesus-jeans is one more example of Toscani's contrastive *modus operandi*. The erotic barely covered bottom stands for open sexuality, while Jesus himself is cited – a blasphemous illustration, at least from the Vatican's perspective (Salvemini 2002: 11f; cf. Tinic 1997: 4). Pasolini (1922–1975), regards the Jesus-jeans campaign as a representation of Toscani's “radical intellectual critique on the highly developed societies” (Salvemini 2002: 12) and thus problematizes modern society's resistance to the church's moral concepts. From his point of view, the double-edged advertisement symbolizes the “social metamorphose” of Italy's 1960s (Salvemini 2002: 12), he describes a “fight between the Vatican's Jesus and the blue jeans' Jesus” (Salvemini 2002: 13). In contrast to Pasolini's prognosis, the Vatican prohibits the publication of the poster; it disappears within a short time (cf. Salvemini 2002: 13).

¹ For image source see Portfolio... 2012.

Toscani's photographs from a theological observer's perspective. To begin with, I would like to demonstrate what Toscani's photographs have positively initiated, before I take a more critical standpoint also seizing the Vatican's argumentation.

Firstly, due to the composition of Toscani's pictures – the extraordinarily combination of familiar images in unusual positions or with distinctive slogans – the observer's attention is captured. Considering the Jesus-jeans advertisement, simply the fact of naked skin draws many people's attention to the photograph. Something similar happens with the kissing photos of the yet to be described UNHATE campaign (cf. UNHATE Foundation 2012). Portraying two people kissing each other is nothing extraordinarily. Every lingerie-commercial, every perfume-marketing (for example) works with sexual appeal. So in both cases, sexual images, poses or actions, catch our sight. Once being alerted to the photo, one realizes the unanticipated message, the underlying idea. Consequently, what Toscani operates with is drawing people's attention via a topic which attracts us. It is through this medium – sexuality – Toscani transports his rather impressive fight against racism, violence, war, and illnesses (as in the osteoporosis and the *No-ANOREXIA* campaign). At this point, it becomes obvious that the problem culminates in the ethical question whether – from a Christian standpoint – it can be justified to use a maybe offending and very private image to transport a certainly important and endorsable message.

At this point, the Vatican's argumentation is taken under consideration, before a concluding statement is aspired.

The Vatican and the UNHATE campaign of BENETTON (Toscani) – the effort of an ethical judgement

The photograph (Fig. 5) portrays Pope Benedict XVI and the Egyptian Imam, Sheik Ahmed el-Tayeb from the Cairo Institute Al Ashar, kissing each others lips. It shows an intimate scene: both men have their eyes closed, lost in affection for each other. On the whole, the UNHATE campaign consists of five more photographs, showing political opponents in the same kissing-scene: US-President Barack Obama kissing the Chinese President Hu Jintao and the Venezuelan state President Hugo Chávez on another picture; the Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu with the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and the North-Korean head of state Kim Jong-il kissing the South-Korean president Lee Myung-bak as well as the German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel kissing France's former president Nicolas Sarkozy. Right from the beginning, a crucial difference between those pictures and for example the Caro photos can be stated: while Caro voluntarily agreed to be depicted on huge exhibition spaces, none of the kissing couples has been asked for their agreement. However, it becomes obvious, that Toscani does not intend to attack the Vatican or more precisely the Pope himself; moreover, he portrays some of the world's mightiest political (and / or religious) figures. However, there is a distinctive difference with the portrayal of the Pope and the Sheik, which might explain the Vatican's – compared to the other states – impetuous reaction. Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi fiercely criticises the campaign. The Vatican claims an immediate pullback from *Benetton's* side. *Benetton's* campaign goal "world-wide love" as well as "accepting opponent's, even the

enemy's views" has provoked a legal court fight between the Vatican and *Benetton*. According to the German newspaper *Hamburger Abendblatt* the photograph of the Pope and the Sheik disappeared from *Benetton's* website within one hour, after the Vatican's intervention. The Vatican enforced the withdrawal, because of the inappropriate manipulation on the photograph of the Pope and the sexually embarrassing and absurd situation he was portrayed in. According to Vatican spokesman Lombardi, the photograph hurts believer's feelings. Moreover, he refers to the "unacceptable" manipulation and usage of the Pope's person for the reason of pure marketing of a fashion brand, which demonstrates a "lack of respect" towards believers and the Pope himself. As a consequence, "The Catholic youth group 'Papaboys' appealed teenagers for a boycott of Benetton-clothing" (Küssen verboten... 2011).



Fig. 5². UNHATE: Pope Benedict XVI and Sheik Ahmed el-Tayeb

The campaign shows how marketing neglects the basic standards of respect towards persons, in order to gain attention by provocation. The Vatican Secretary of State investigates which steps "competent authorities" might pursue to "grant a protection of the respect of the person of the Holy Father" (Küssen verboten... 2011).

In order to understand the sharp reaction, the observer has to consider another aspect, which makes the Pope–Imam picture scandalous in such an extent: not only is Pope Benedict XVI shown in a sexually intimate situation, the photomontage also addresses the matter of homosexuality by showing two men kissing each other. Thus, the observer can assume that Toscani not only identifies the overcoming of hate with an overcoming of religious and political fights, but also with overcoming the exclusiveness of heterosexuality: Hate can be turned into UNHATE, if other people's lifestyles are to be treated with respect. Hate can be turned into UNHATE, if the idea that heterosexuality is normative is overcome. Physical closeness thereby symbolizes a closeness of values. Hate can be turned into UNHATE, if everyone accepts (and respects) his or her neighbour's rights – if every one is *united* in the same respect. Respect for the other, love of the other, UNHATE, health, antiracism, anti-outcasts – those are all

² For image source see UNHATE Foundation 2012.

biblical messages; Jesus' messages and thus also values and messages propagated by the Catholic Church. Therefore: where is the problem? From a philosophical-ethical standpoint I would like to analyze the question whether in this case *the end justifies the means*. Doing so, I apply the ethical concept of the German Jesuit Knauer, *the restatement of the principle of double action*, to the example of the Pope–Imam photo.

The principle of double action (Knauer S. J.)

According to the principle of double action, each action one performs in order to reach a certain goal is always determined by a positive *and* a negative action (cf. Knauer 2002: 37, 39). The positive one is usually the achievement of one's goal; the negative implies a certain kind of loss or damage. In the harmless state, a loss of time and energy is involved; in a more precarious situation, harming others is the price one pays. The second situation describes the present case and alerts to the question whether the price one (Toscani respectively *Benetton*) pays is a legitimate one.

Knauer's reinterpretation of the principle of double action states:

“Only an action, which allows or causes damage ‘without an appropriate reason’, can be ‘intrinsically bad’. However, one is allowed to accept or cause damage if

1. the action has an ‘appropriate cause’;
2. the action is not enabled by another ‘intrinsically bad’ action of the same agent;
3. the action is not used to enable another ‘intrinsically bad’ action of the same agent” (Knauer 2002: 67).

Step by step I will analyze whether Toscani's action of producing the photomontage of the Pope and the Imam has an “appropriate cause” or “is enabled/enables another intrinsically bad action”.

1. Does the action have an appropriate cause? (first principle):

According to Knauer, every action necessarily does have a cause. Either one seeks to reach a certain positive goal or one wants to avoid something negative; no one pursues per se an overall negative goal (cf. Knauer 2002: 44). This basic principle can also be found in Thomas Aquinas' ethics, he refers to it as “*sub ratione boni*” (Thomas Aquinas 1933 I-II q8 a1, cited after Knauer 2002: 45). The difficult aspect about the present case is that we are not precisely informed about Toscani's goals with the UNHATE campaign. Thus, the following can be considered as a speculation which nevertheless should help to come to a conclusion on the ethical defensibility of Toscani's campaign. Since Toscani's UNHATE campaign is an advertisement campaign for *Benetton*, one of the reasons for his action is to raise the number of sold *Benetton* clothes. Advertisement for clothes is nothing per se negative, so one can presume that Toscani, as a professional photographer working for *Benetton*, has an appropriate reason to take pictures of other entities to fulfill his contract. We can assume that one reason why Toscani works for *Benetton* is to earn money, but working for a cloth-company in order to earn money is also nothing objectionable. In addition, Toscani obviously – his earlier statements support my thesis – wants to “surprise” people, he wants to transport a certain message which he considers to be helpful and appropriate for the *Benetton* advertisement. His message is part of a series of

photographs of people (and animals). He wants to fight against racism, political prosecution, war and hatred (cf. Toscani 1995: 44). Making people aware of their same ontological and ethical status, hinting at them being *united* by existing as beings of the same kind, can be considered as part of the corporate identity / imagery of Toscani's work for *Benetton*. One can easily agree that surprising others as well as pursuing the overall good of justice and peace can be considered as *appropriate causes*. Those *appropriate causes* apply to the *UNHATE* campaign as well. As a conclusion, Toscani's ultimate goal seems rather unproblematic – so far.

2. Is the action enabled by an intrinsically bad action? (second principle):

In a second step, I would like to discuss the question whether the means of Toscani's work justify his noble goal. This time, Knauer's second demand – “the action is not enabled by another ‘intrinsically bad’ action of the same agent” – is taken into consideration. So the question arises: is designing a photomontage showing the Pope kissing Sheik el-Tayeb an intrinsically bad action? What is meant by *intrinsically bad*? An action is intrinsically bad if the acting agent wants to reach a bad goal by performing the action. For example, if Toscani's goal is to harm the Pope and / or the Sheik and / or those who admire either person, thus if Toscani portrays the two kissing man *in order to* hurt them or others, his action could be considered intrinsically bad, because it is motivated by and caused for bad reasons. However, I do not think one can seriously say that Toscani's goal is to hurt the Pope, the Sheik and / or people who admire one or the other. Nevertheless, I believe that Toscani might have known that his photomontage causes trouble, but accepts to hurt others for a noble goal: *UNHATE!* Concluding we can state that Knauer's second claim is fulfilled as well.

3. Does the action enable another intrinsically bad action? (third principle):

According to the third demand, damage is legitimate if “the action is not used to enable another ‘intrinsically bad’ action of the same agent”. Since Toscani's final goal has already been positively evaluated, one cannot say that the Pope–Sheik montage enables a bad action rather than a desirable one.

The first principle – revisited

So far, it becomes obvious that evaluating the case according to Knauer's principle of double action has not led to a satisfying judgement. Since the second and third claims are easily met, we need to go back and take a second look at the first principle, the *appropriate cause*. Knauer points to Thomas Aquinas, who defines the *appropriate cause* as an action, which is appropriate to a certain goal it wants to reach. Thus if the overall goal, the overall message of the poster is to reduce hate and prosper respect for the other, the action itself cannot cause hate, cannot be disrespectful. Thus the action and the message cannot contradict each other (cf. Knauer 2002: 36, 46; “it is all about the question, if the action is in accordance with its pursued value or shared values” (Knauer 2002: 47); cf. Tinic 1997: 12)). Here, we get a helpful tool for a second evaluation: Toscani's message – reducing hate and thus reducing the harm hate causes – contradicts the acceptance of hurting observer's feelings by portraying the

Pope and the Sheik kissing each other. As a consequence, hurting others is the damage that is to be avoided, in order to speak of an ethically correct action. However, this raises another question: is hurting some people's feelings not negligible (insignificant) compared to the overall good of proclaiming *UNHATE*? In order to answer this question, one has to examine whether the same goal – proclaiming *UNHATE* – could have been reached by other means, which might not have caused any pain or lesser pain to the observer? Could the damage have been prevented? The answer is affirmative. No one forced Toscani to design this photomontage; he did not have to do it. Could he have easily achieved the same goal (*Benetton* advertisement; proclaiming *UNHATE*) by alternative portrayals (cf. Knauer 2002: 43, 48)? Here again, the answer is “yes”, he did so, as other photos (e.g. the heart-photo (cf. Salvemini 2002: 24)) show. From Knauer's perspective, Toscani and those being involved and responsible for posting the photos should have considered the possible harm the photomontages could cause and thus they were responsible for looking for other, less harmful, motives (cf. Knauer 2002: 45). Knauer states: “For this reason it is necessary to consider the wider horizon [of an action]” (Knauer 2002: 51). According to Knauer, the overall message of the action contradicts its partly consequences. Thus, the pursued value of *UNHATE* by the action of portraying the Pope and the Sheik kissing each other, does not allow talking of an *appropriate cause* for the action, because the primary cause contradicts the secondary result and thus it does not justify its value: not as a whole and also not in the long run (cf. Knauer 2002: 52). As a result, the question opening the discussion has to be negated: “The end does not justify the means”.

The conclusion commemorates the closeness to the following (second) formulation of Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative: “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end” (Kant 1785: 30).

In Knauer's phrasing: “An end is used only for the sake of its own use, while a pure means is only wanted due to its – distinct from itself – end” (Knauer 2002: 111).

While Kant would not forbid using others as means, he strictly intervenes when others are used “*simply as a means*”. In our case, Kant would not forbid to portray the Pope and the Sheik as means for a certain end (advertisement; *UNHATE* message etc.), but he would intervene as soon as the Pope and the Sheik are used “*simply as means*”, which they are in our case. Pope Benedict XVI and Sheik el-Tayeb are used *simply* to proclaim a certain message; they are not used as an end.

Conclusions 1: Less harmful – less effective?

I would like to conclude the article by raising the question whether a less harmful campaign would have been as effective as the *UNHATE* campaign. Strictly speaking, in all or at least most of Toscani's photographs, harm is portrayed and it seems like the effectiveness corresponds with the harm. In the photo showing the bloody clothes of the soldier, harm and hate is exhibited, and the shocking sight of this harm has an effect on the observer. Also the “most spectacular picture of the year 1992” (Salvemini 2002: 91) with the HIV-positive man lying in the bed, surrounded by his

grieving loved ones – because of the similarity with his appearance and the dying Christ, Toscani calls this picture “truly a pieta” (Toscani 1995: 58; cf. Toscani 1995: 57–59) – shows harm and vulnerability. Comparably, Caro’s body is the incarnation of harm and vulnerability. Concerning the kissing pictures of the UNHATE campaign as well as the picture of the young nun and the priest kissing each other, the effect is similar, the message almost the same, however, what is portrayed is love, beauty and eroticism and trust: peaceful situations hurting others feelings? By the way, the nun-priest picture shows the range of reactions almost every picture of Toscani causes: while Italy prohibits its publication, the picture is granted with the “Eurobest Award” in England (cf. Salvemini 2002: 50f; cf. Tinic 1997: 4; cf. Toscani 1995: 63–73).

While the pictures of Caro, the pieta and the bloody clothes document reality, the kissing pictures are fiction. Thus, it seems that in the case of the Pope–Sheik photo, people are more affected by fiction than by reality. What is the difference here? Stating that the Pope–Sheik picture causes furor while the Caro picture stays without consequences would be completely wrong. Each picture has impressive effects on the observer; however the complaining and reacting parties are different. Particularly with regard to the Vatican, the question has to be concretized: could Toscani have transported his message, that UNHATE(ing) each other implies a certain closeness even among political or religious opponents, with a different image? As has already been postulated, I dare to assert that portraying Benedict XVI and Sheik el-Tayeb embracing each other would have had almost the same effect.

Benetton immediately calls back the picture with the Pope and Sheik, apologizing for the hurt it caused. With this action, *Benetton* somehow agrees with the Vatican’s claim and accusation.

Conclusions 2: Radical intimacy

“*Benetton’s* message is the debate” (Toscani 1995: 86).

Toscani succeeds in demonstrating that art is neither something fixed nor necessarily sheer beauty and innocence. For him, it is the process of capturing ambiguous moments. What Caravaggio and others before him showed in complex oil paintings, he realizes in unostentatious photographs. He accomplishes to cross the border between journalistic news coverage and conventional art images; thereby he transfers the unmasked hazardousness of reality into our field of vision – apart from the newspaper and TV newscasts, which seemed to exclusively claim to be in favor of documenting worldwide happenings until then (cf. Tinic 1997: 4f). Salvemini recognizes: “The distance from the advertisement to the hallowed halls of esthetic sanctification has never been such short” (Salvemini 2002: 157).

However, the outrageous effects Toscani’s works have led to, demonstrate the gap between news reports and advertisement campaigns. While the former is – as a matter of course – authorized to participate in political-social discussions, many refuse the latter this exact right (cf. Salvemini 2002: 86). By taking the observer into the radical intimacy of the captured moment, Toscani “crosses physical borders <...>, [and thereby he] attempts to transcend ideological boundaries” (Tinic 1997: 4). Toscani

succeeds in turning house walls into news exhibitions, showing his “modern icons” (Toscani 1995: 55).

In disregard of traditional standards, the artist turns advertisement into a “communicative happening” (Kros 1996: 107, 112; cf. Tinic 1997: 4; cf. Müller 1994: 185), a “*political forum*” (Tinic 1997: 3; cf. Toscani 1995: 43). Kros resumes: “The [Benetton-] campaign is a consequential advancement of observable social processes, which had been accumulatively described as a/the ‘commercializing of communication’, ‘economization of politics’, ‘aestheticization society’s overall concepts’ and ‘politization of economy’ and thus accentuate the increasingly societal and cultural impact of advertisement” (Kros 1996: 107f).

Regardless of the justifiable critique, it becomes obvious that unlike the majority of sales promotions Toscani’s *Benetton* pictures refuse to ensnare our senses, they refrain from suggesting us that our lives will be more liveable if we wear *Benetton* sweaters (cf. Toscani 1995: 168). Moreover, Toscani’s photographs ask questions, they arouse discussions, dialogues, reflections and in this perspective, he does something very Christian: he does not gloss over pain and injustice in our world; he confronts us with the uncensored events of life. The Christian message communicates hope for salvation and everlasting happiness. And here is the interesting part: it does so by portraying a “crucified man with bloody waistcloths and not by portraying Claudia Schiffer in Chanel-panties” (Toscani 1995: 132).

It is the authentic compassion of Toscani’s pictures that reminds us of our responsibility as human beings. Toscani holds up a mirror to us, showing us the faces and bodies of those, who pay the prize for a lifestyle we are often so proud of. It is time for an authentic conversion.

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AUTENTIŠKAS GAILESTIS?
IŽEIDŽIANČIOS O. TOSCANI KAMPANIJOS:
ETINIS-ESTETINIS TYRINĖJIMAS
IŠ TEOLOGO PERSPEKTYVOS

Julia Enxing

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje pateikiamas šokiruojančių Oliviero Toscani fotografijų etinis-estetinis tyrinėjimas. Čia skaitytojas trumpai supažindinamas su Toscani gyvenimu ir darbais, pradedant nuo trijų svarbiausiųjų aprašymo ir analizės: anoreksija sergančio modelio Isabelle's Caro fotografijų, džinsų reklaminių fotografijų su Jėzaus atvaizdais, taip pat *UNHATE* kampanijos – vienos jo fotografijų serijos, skirtos *United Colors of Benetton*. Taip iš teologo perspektyvos šiame straipsnyje siekiama atkreipti dėmesį į numanomas jo darbų etines reikšmes. Tam pasitelkiamos tam tikros etikos teorijos ir vertinimo metodai, tokie kaip dvigubos pasekmės principas (Peteris Knaueris).

Reikšminiai žodžiai: etinis paribys, žmogaus orumas, Knaueris, dvigubos pasekmės principas, Toscani.

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